

[By Bob Kinzel](#)

Congressman Peter Welch says he's optimistic that Congress will pass a new 5 year Farm bill before the current law expires at the end of September.

He's working with a bipartisan group of House members to break the current logjam on this legislation.

The U.S. Senate has given its approval to a new five year farm bill and the House Agriculture committee has voted on its own version of this legislation.

But the bill is in limbo because House Republican leaders have decided to keep the legislation off of the House floor for the foreseeable future because they say they don't have the votes to pass the bill at this time.

Welch is a member of the House Agriculture committee and he says the bill adopted by his committee needs to pass because it includes a new stabilization program for dairy farmers.

Welch says major Farm bills are always controversial and that's no reason to leave this bill in legislative limbo:

"That's not an excuse for Congress to fail to do its job," he said. "So a number of us, 79 of us, signed a bipartisan letter that Kristi Noam from South Dakota and I, she's a Republican, did, a bipartisan letter, to get our colleagues to urge the speaker to bring this bill to the floor."

And as the September 30th deadline approaches, Welch thinks Congress will finally act on this issue:

"I think the political pressure will be so great that the cost to the leadership who makes this decision will be much greater if they fail to act than if they go through the messy controversy of bringing this to the floor," he said. "So logic suggests and political survival suggests that the leadership decide to bring this to the floor."

It's just been reported that this year's corn crop will be much smaller than expected because of a serious drought in the Midwest. Welch says this development will result in higher feed prices for farmers and he thinks the time has come to stop diverting corn to a federal ethanol program:

"I think it makes no sense whatsoever and that's why I joined 160 of my colleagues urging Secretary Jackson to wave that mandate," he said. "I'd like to eliminate forever but let's at last waive it in this very difficult drought circumstance."

Congress is on its annual August recess until the beginning of next month and Welch is hopeful that backers of the farm bill will contact their local representatives about this issue.